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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 4 May 1992, at 10 a.m.

Chairman:

Mr. ERDOS

(Hungary)

- Reports by Chairmen of Working Groups

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

REPORTS BY CHAIRMEN OF WORKING GROUPS

The CHAIRMAN: The Disarmament Commission received the first round of progress reports from its subsidiary bodies last Monday, 27 April, and all four Working Groups have begun their second week of deliberations on the respective agenda items.

During the course of deliberations, more views were expressed and various proposals were made by delegations on the subjects under consideration. In particular, I should like to point out that Working Group I, which, as we all know, is in the final stage of its deliberations, has been engaged in intensive work on the subject of objective information on military matters, precisely with a view to finalizing its recommendations.

In accordance with our programme of work, this meeting will be devoted to the second round of progress reports by the Chairmen of the Working Groups on the work on their respective agenda items.

I call first upon the Chairman of Working Group I, Ambassador Carl-Magnus Hyltenius of Sweden.

Mr. HYLTEINIUS (Sweden): Since the first progress report was presented, a week ago, Working Group I, on objective information on military matters, has had six meetings. Furthermore, informal, open-ended consultations have taken place in order to promote solutions to such problems as have been particularly contentious.

The Working Group has completed its first reading of the introductory part of the Chairman's paper of last year and of the section on objectives. It has also nearly completed its first reading of the sections on principles and on scope, and has embarked on its deliberations on mechanisms, which is the fourth and last subtitle in the Chairman's paper of last year which forms the basis for this year's work.

(Mr. Hyltenius, Sweden)

The atmosphere in the Group is very good, and many delegations are participating actively in the efforts to find common ground on all issues. Last year's paper has been considerably amended as a result of extensive and thorough discussions. The spirit of compromise is indeed very encouraging. We are, however, now rapidly approaching the end of the limited time available to us, and a considerable amount of work still lies ahead. I therefore hope that all delegations will appreciate this situation and contribute to a rapid and successful conclusion of our work.

The CHAIRMAN: We certainly share Ambassador Hyltenius' expectations and hopes that we shall all understand the situation of Working Group I. We shall do as much as we can to provide him with sufficient background, a sufficient time-frame and sufficient infrastructure to finish the Working Group's third and final year of deliberations, in which we are all interested.

I now call on the representative of Peru, who will report on behalf of the Chairman of Working Group III on the questions before that Working Group.

Mr. VASQUEZ (Peru) (interpretation from Spanish): My delegation is pleased to report that in the past week Working Group III has continued its deliberations on the first two topics of the paper submitted by Ambassador Wisnumurti at the 1991 session. Working Group III has so far held six meetings and has succeeded in adopting, while also updating and amending, some of the principles and guidelines in the document, which have to do both with the section on relationship between regional security and global security and arms limitation and disarmament, and the section on principles and guidelines. Delegations have shown heightened interest in this subject as well as a constructive spirit; they have proposed new ideas and principles that have enriched our consideration on this subject.

(Mr. Vasquez, Peru)

Since this is the last week of the Commission's work, and since Working Group III has only three more meetings available to it, it is essential that we accelerate the pace of our deliberations so that we may complete our consideration of the first two topics of the document.

Lastly, I should like to appeal to all delegations taking part in the work of Working Group III to maintain, during this decisive phase of our work, the spirit of cooperation that has been manifested so far.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of India, who will report on behalf of the Chairman of Working Group II.

Mr. WADHWA (India): First of all, I should like to apologize on behalf of Ambassador Prakash Shah, who could not be here this morning due to prior commitments. I have a statement which I shall deliver on his behalf regarding the work of Working Group II.

Working Group II has now held six meetings on the "Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons". Since the last plenary meeting, the Working Group has progressed in its discussion of the four agreed topics before it. The Group also agreed on the elements to be discussed under topic 3.

The exchange of views on the first two topics has been completed, and the Group is in the process of completing the exchange of views on the third topic as elaborated by a core group that was chaired by the delegation of Egypt. The discussion of the remainder of topic 3 and of topic 4 - "The role of the United Nations system in the process of nuclear disarmament with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons" - will continue. After the exchange of views on all topics, the Chairman plans to introduce the draft report for the

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Disarmament Commission's approval, and this draft report could serve as a basis for the future work of the Group.

To date, there has been a lively exchange of views on the topics, particularly on strengthening the process of nuclear disarmament. In addition, a number of delegations presented working papers which have contributed to the discussions in the Group. Although there are persistent and wide divergences of views on the topics under item 5 of the Disarmament Commission's agenda, there is a noticeable absence of acrimony in the debates, and the Chairman is encouraged that the Group will be able to arrive at an understanding on this item in its future work.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the Chairman of Working Group IV, Ambassador Emeka Ayo Azikiwe.

Mr. AZIKIWE (Nigeria): My progress report this morning is very brief. Working Group IV, on the role of science and technology, held four meetings last week. Progress is slow but reassuring. We have moved a step further from procedural matters. Indeed, we have completed the exchange of views on sub-item 1 on "Scientific and technological developments and their impact on international security", and on sub-item 2 on "Science and technology for disarmament".

We have before us a number of working papers, which we are now closely examining. This afternoon, apart from the scheduled Working Group meeting, an informal group will be meeting to attempt to draft a report on the two first sub-items. This informal group, which will be chaired by Ambassador Peggy Mason of Canada, will be open-ended. Meanwhile, the Working Group will commence its exchange of views on sub-items 3 and 4 this afternoon. We hope that sufficient progress will be made on our intended structure of their discussion.

The CHAIRMAN: We have now completed the second round of reports of progress on the various agenda items. As indicated in the adopted general programme of work and timetable, contained in documents A/CN.10/1992/CRP.1 and Informal Paper No. 2, the reports of various Working Groups should be finalized on Friday, 8 May, at 6.00 p.m. for processing, and the Commission will consider and adopt all the reports on Monday, 11 May, in order to be able to conclude its 1992 substantive session. At this point, I should like to ask all those delegations that wish to make concluding statements to inscribe their names on the list of speakers with the Secretariat now.

As a result of consultations at the expanded Bureau meeting held last Friday, it was decided that a meeting of the Committee of the Whole will be convened this morning immediately after this plenary meeting to consider a few questions of an organizational, practical character that might have a bearing on our future work. I therefore intend, after adjourning this plenary meeting, immediately to open the meeting of the Committee of the Whole to discuss these questions.

The representative of Mexico wishes to make a statement at this stage, and I now call on him.

Mr. HERNANDEZ BASAVE (Mexico) (interpretation from Spanish): Now that we are setting out on the home stretch of our session, the Mexican delegation wishes to share with members of the Commission some of its thoughts and concerns on the progress of our work in this "new" Disarmament Commission.

As we have said before, the delegation of Mexico fully supports the revitalization of the Disarmament Commission's work. That is why we are in favour of the process of restructuring the Commission that began two years ago with a view to enhancing its efficiency as a multilateral body for deliberations on disarmament. We agree with the idea that we should have a

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clear, concise agenda that reflects disarmament priorities and allows us to carry out a thorough and comprehensive consideration of substantive questions.

However, we are concerned by the slow progress in our work on the priority items and by the desire of some delegations to undo the commitments made on a consensus basis to halt and reverse the arms race instead of to work towards reversing the arms race. The Mexican delegation does not share the view that the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament has now become obsolete and no longer reflects disarmament priorities.

(Mr. Hernandez Basave,
Mexico)

We are very surprised that one of the, supposedly, strongest arguments used by some delegations, including some representing non-nuclear-weapon States, is that the Final Document is now 14 years old; it is argued that it consists of outmoded language belonging to the cold-war era. We are even more surprised that those same delegations fail to adopt a critical attitude to, for example, the idea of nuclear deterrence, which they even defend.

As we have pointed out during the deliberations in the working groups, we are profoundly concerned that some delegations are using the meetings of the Commission to water down or reject the political commitments entered into by consensus in 1978, commitments made in order to achieve general and complete disarmament, beginning with the most urgent matter, nuclear weapons. We are concerned because the world continues to be infested with horrendous nuclear weapons, with no sign of the political will completely to eliminate such weapons, which represent a constant threat to international security and in the short term impede the consolidation of a genuine non-proliferation regime.

The Mexican delegation realizes that implementing the 1978 Final Document requires new thinking, based on and inspired by non-military concepts, and perhaps the development of a new culture in our societies. But this should not cause us to abandon the objective of general and complete disarmament, nor should it compel us to take for granted, as inevitable, the existence of nuclear weapons and the application of doctrines and policies of nuclear deterrence.

Today, almost 25 years into the life of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and notwithstanding the major reductions of nuclear arsenals announced by the two

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super-Powers, the nuclear Powers possess three times as many nuclear weapons as they did in 1968, when the Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed. Therefore, the Mexican delegation will continue to support the validity of the priorities agreed in the Final Document and to advocate the full implementation of the other commitments in the Final Document.

We urge all delegations to make a serious and honest effort to revitalize our work along the proper lines and not to stray from our priority tasks, not to be carried away by the idea that nuclear weapons are no longer a danger to the existence of mankind, because of the fortunate fact that the cold-war era is now over and hence the danger of a nuclear conflagration has virtually disappeared. Now that none of the nuclear Powers has an enemy that needs to be deterred with weapons of mass destruction we have a unique opportunity to turn round the arms race, to convert military industries to exclusively civilian, peaceful purposes and therefore to abandon the philosophies underpinning the policies of nuclear deterrence.

Lastly, the Mexican delegation reiterates its willingness to do its utmost to come up with texts enjoying the consensus support of all members of the Commission, provided, of course, that such a consensus makes sense and that the agreements thus achieved will not subsequently be disregarded simply because a certain number of years have elapsed since their adoption, even though reality clearly tells us that commitments entered into by consensus should continue to be honoured in order to solve the problems that gave rise to them in the first place. In particular, we must make sure that the quest for consensus does not lead us to establish an agenda in multilateral forums aimed at the adoption of secondary or partial disarmament measures.

The CHAIRMAN: We shall certainly bear in mind the statement made by our Mexican colleague and shall devote as much energy and attention as are required to carry out our mandate: the completion of the working groups' work - namely, Working Group I, which will have to finalize its work this year, and the other working groups, which will still have some time to go. We share in the endeavour to make this substantive session and future sessions as successful as possible. There is no doubt about that.

The next plenary meeting will take place on Monday, 11 May.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.